



*From the desk of*  
**Representative Jim Moeller**

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*June 2005*



**D**ear Neighbor:

I'm proud to share this report on the 2005 Legislature.

The budget-writing session was wrapped up on time — for one of the very few times in our state's 116 years!

We covered a wide variety of issues this session. I'm focusing today's report on topics I believe are most relevant for you and other southwestern Washington people. As always, please let me know if you'd like more information.

Best wishes — and thank you for caring about *your* state government!

A handwritten signature of Jim Moeller in black ink.

**Jim Moeller**  
State Representative  
49<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
693-0804 (local phone number)



## ✓ Health care:

*Families have a right to basic medical attention when they need it*

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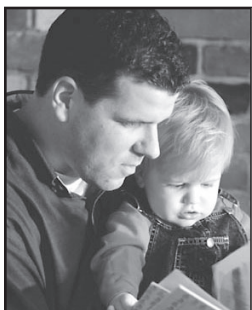
**M**ost people agree that primary, reliable health care is not a frill — especially when it comes to children, disabled citizens, elderly people, and other folks who shouldn't be left to fend for themselves. This year, the Legislature took up a number of proposals related to affordability and availability of medical coverage.

A very significant accomplishment is that health care is provided for an additional 38,750 kids. Basic medical services are also preserved for 955,000 Washington people in need. (I'm committed to a policy guaranteeing health coverage for *all* kids in low-income families by the year 2010.) There will be no cuts in critically needed Medicaid prescription and transportation benefits, and we've strengthened mental-health and substance-abuse programs.

We approved legislation ordering parity in insurance coverage for mental-health treatment. This measure recognizes that people have the same right to appropriate treatment-coverage for mental illnesses as they now receive for other health needs.

Another bill that we passed this session will go a long way toward reducing the price of prescription drugs. **It's a good step toward making prescriptions more available for our citizens who most need them — but can least afford them.** The measure allows our Health Care Authority to establish a prescription-purchasing consortium in which private citizens, local governments, and other entities can participate. This consortium can include (if they want to join) local governments, private organizations, labor groups, and people who either don't have insurance or don't have sufficient coverage for medicines they need to take.

A similar measure clears the way for insurance-pooling on the part of small companies. This is another strategy to make coverage more affordable — *and* more available.



## ✓ Veterans:

*Let's re-enforce our commitment to people who've served this country*

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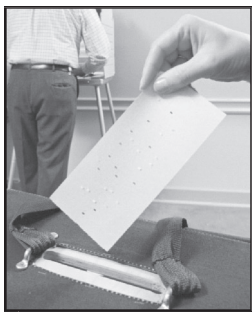
**V**eterans should control programs and services designed to help other veterans. It doesn't get any simpler or any truer than that. For the past three years, my office has been working on legislation aimed at improving services for impoverished veterans. We've been working to get all sides to sit down and hammer out a plan that works for everyone — most of all, for veterans themselves.

**We got it done this year! The new state policy seeks to guarantee help for indigent veterans and their families.**

It seems to me that society is pretty good at patriotism when the troops are putting their lives on the line. This bill is about making sure that veterans' needs are met *after* their service, too. Representatives from veterans' organizations worked with my office and with county officials to develop this legislation.

The measure creates a veterans-only advisory board in every county. County authorities are obliged to talk with the advisory board to determine services needed for indigent veterans. Make no mistake: Veterans will always be at the helm of the decision-making process to make sure their fellow veterans receive top services.

It is fundamental to my way of thinking that we should always respect and support our troops and their families. **But let's not limit our respect and support to times like the last couple years when patriotism is popular. Let's keep caring about these men and women *after* their time in the service, too.**



## ✓ **Democracy:**

*Citizens should feel confident  
in the strength of the electoral system*

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**N**o doubt about it, the Legislature had a big responsibility this year to fix the shorts in the electoral system. The continuing controversy over the results of the gubernatorial election has focused attention on the need for reform. But the Legislature got down to business on elections issues beyond the race for the governor's mansion.

Before I get to the election-reform policies approved this year, let me say a few words about a plan I've pursued for years: instant-runoff voting. **We won full legislative approval and received the governor's signature to test-drive the new system!**

This type of voting will give Vancouver a chance to try instant-runoff voting if the city enrolls in a five-year pilot project. First, local elected officials must affirm their support for the idea by approving a city-charter amendment to use the system for electing nonpartisan city officers.

Instant-runoff voting is used all over the world, but our old state law prevented it anywhere in Washington. A majority of Vancouver citizens already supports the idea. **I believe that instant-runoff voting will reduce election costs, and recharge our citizens' interest in the voting process.**

In instant-runoff-voting, voters can select more than one candidate for a single race by ranking candidates in preferred order. A candidate receiving a majority of "first choice" votes is elected. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes after the first count, the "second choice" candidates on the ballots cast for the candidate receiving the fewest votes receive those votes. Generally, this process continues until one candidate receives a majority of votes cast for the position or until all but one candidate has been eliminated.

You can learn more about this method of voting and actually try it for yourself at this interactive Web site: [www.chrisgates.net/irv/](http://www.chrisgates.net/irv/).

**Also in terms of election reform, this year's Legislature:**

- ◆ Tightened the process for verifying voter-signatures.
- ◆ Directed a stricter review of county-elections procedures.
- ◆ Fortified rules regarding provisional ballots.
- ◆ Ordered larger counties to count ballots every day after an election.
- ◆ Encouraged voting by military and overseas voters (and improved their voting process).
- ◆ Strengthened the system for preventing unqualified people from voting.



## ✓ **Other matters:**

*You just can't put a price on  
the safety and security of your family*

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**W**e considered quite a variety of other measures in Olympia this session. None of them is more important than proposals aimed at bolstering peace of mind for folks who've put down roots in our neighborhoods and communities. It certainly bears repeating: **You just can't put a price on the safety and security of your family.**

**Public safety.** One bill for which I won support will help keep guns out of the hands of people who have been found not guilty of a crime by reason of insanity. People who have been identified as having mental-health problems — and whose conduct has brought

them to the attention of the criminal court — should not be able to possess guns. Unless they demonstrate that they're now in truly good health, there is no reason for them to have a firearm.

**Methamphetamine drugs.** Another measure sent to the governor intends to keep an eye on the sale of precursor drugs (ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, and phenylpropanolamine), which are common ingredients used to make methamphetamines. The new state policy requires retail stores to place these medications behind the counter — and purchasers must show photo identification to prove they're at least 18 years old. Buyers must also sign a log of their purchase to help law enforcement track excessive purchases of these ingredients.

**Transportation.** The Legislature, in a bipartisan vote, passed a higher gas tax, which will cost the average driver about a dollar a week the first year. This additional revenue will pay for major improvements to our roads, highways, and other parts of our infrastructure. The safety improvements emphasized in this new transportation package, for example, include guardrails, passing lanes, intersection illumination, interchange upgrades, and new on-ramps for particularly dangerous stretches of highway around our state.

**Operating budget.** No, I'm not a huge fan of the new biennial budget, which we approved on the last day of session. Frankly, big changes are needed in the revenue stream our state relies on to fund essential programs and services. The revenue process needs to be sustainable and dependable. I'll keep working toward that end.

**Still other measures we approved this session:**

- ◆ Fully fund teacher-pay raises and class-size reductions.
- ◆ Assure that our own WSU Vancouver will be the state's first branch campus to offer undergraduate classes.
- ◆ Demand fairness in our unemployment-insurance policy for construction workers.
- ◆ Provide more assistance for low-income citizens who want to buy a home.
- ◆ Guarantee reliable, good-paying new jobs both in the capital budget and in the public-works trust fund — which each include money for historic levels of new-school construction around our state, as well as other essential building projects in our Vancouver region.
- ◆ Distribute thousands of additional seats for students in our colleges and universities.
- ◆ Order the construction of environmentally sound public buildings, and the promotion of environmentally sound vehicles.

**Civil rights.** It seems like every legislative report I send you includes, unfortunately, this note: **Legislation barring discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation won House approval — but died in the Senate.** It's the same this time around. But we did at least get this fair, common-sense proposal to a vote on the floor of the Senate! And that's saying something — because always before, the bill simply got "ignored to death" by my Senate colleagues. Be assured: This idea isn't going away.



*For more information — or to express your comments:*

**Representative Jim Moeller**

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